

HEAVY BREATHING

... and the Negro every day lower, more cowardly, more sterile,
less profound, more spent beyond himself, more separate from
himself, more cunning with himself, less straight to himself,

I accept, I accept it all . . .

—AIMÉ CÉSAIRE

"Return to My Native Land"

At the end of heavy breathing,
very little of my focus intentional,
I cross against the light of Mecca.
I recall few instances of piety
and strict obedience.
Nationalism disillusioned me.
My reflections can be traced
to protest slogans
and enchanted graffiti.
My sentiments—whimsical—
the dreams of a young, yearning bride.
Yes, I possess a mouth such as hers:
red, petulant, brutally pouting;
or at times I'm insatiable—
the vampire in the garden, demented
by the blood of a succulent cock.
I prowled in scant sheaths of latex.
I harbor no shame.
I solicit no pity.
I celebrate my natural tendencies,
photosynthesis, erotic customs.
I allow myself to dream of roses

though I know
the bloody war continues.

I am only sure of this:
I continue to awaken
in a rumpled black suit.
Pockets bulging with tools
and ancestral fossils.
A crusty wool suit
with salt on its collar.
I continue to awaken
shell-shocked, wondering
where I come from
beyond mother's womb,
father's sperm.
My past may be lost
beyond the Carolinas
North and South.
I may not recognize
the authenticity
of my Negritude,
so slowly I awaken.

Science continues
dismantling chromosomes.
Tampering with genetic codes.
I am sure of this
as I witness Washington
change its eye color
from brown to blue;
what kind of mutants are we now?
Why is some destruction so beautiful?

*Do you think I could walk pleasantly
and well-suited toward annihilation?*